

CROSSCURRENTS

CURRENT NEWS AND THOUGHT FROM ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

DEC. 2025 & JAN. 20206

A photograph of a vibrant red cardinal perched on a dark, snow-laden branch. The bird is facing left, with its head slightly turned. The background is a soft-focus winter scene with more snow-covered branches and green leaves. The entire image is framed by a light green border.

*“Kindness is
like snow—
it beautifies
everything it
covers.”*

Kahlil Gibran

Connecting

During our Diocesan Convention in November, Bishop Paula shared that one of her priorities is to foster connections within the Diocese. Specifically, she talked about creating opportunities for clergy to connect with one another, and encouraged clergy and parishes to do more connecting and working together. For a variety of reasons, that message resonated with me, and I've been thinking about it ever since.



Clergy are prone to feeling isolated in their work. Many work with very minimal staff and no other clergy in their churches, simply due to their size. Often, the nearest Episcopal Church is several miles away, and many regional groups don't meet very often. It can be lonely work.

The way our church polity is structured, each parish is seen as an individual unit which is meant to be self-supporting. Many parishes are hesitant to engage in partnering in ministry with other churches, which they perceive as a weakness. "We can't do this thing on our own" easily induces guilt or shame. For some, partnering is seen as threatening - "What if people start going to the *other* church?" These, and many other factors, can lead to parishes viewing themselves and behaving like their own little islands.

So why am I talking about this? And what does it have to do with Advent and Christmas? Glad you asked!

Because I believe that this idea of connection is at the heart of everything - God, the universe, the natural world, humanity, reality itself in all its forms - literally everything. Nothing in reality exists in isolation - everything is connected.

One way to look at the Incarnation (*en-flesh-ment*) is that God was connecting to us in a fresh way in Jesus. He came to us as a human being and lived among us - "moved into the neighborhood" - to demonstrate that God is connected to us, and we are connected to God. Not "*can be*," but *are*. It is a reality; it is already so. *What Jesus does is invite us*

into consciously living in this reality of connection with God. Anytime we live consciously in this connection - to ourselves, to others and to God - we are living in reality. When we live as if we are disconnected from ourselves, from others and from God, we are actually living in an illusion - or delusion.

The truth is, if everything is connected, we need each other in order to thrive. The very life energy of God - what we might call the Holy Spirit - flows through these connections. Our deeply-embedded cultural myth of rugged individualism and self-sufficiency is an illusion. It ends up creating isolated and lonely people.

So to bring this back to where I started, I am blessed and we are blessed by the connections we foster here at St. Andrew's. I am fortunate to have clergy colleagues right here, plus an amazing and dedicated staff. We have an active Deanery (smaller geographic unit of the Diocese), and the clergy meet monthly to share prayer, ideas, Diocesan business, and fellowship. I am involved in mentoring newer clergy in the Diocese, which keeps me connected to the vibrancy of newer clergy and allows me to offer whatever wisdom I might share. I am a better priest and person because of these connections.

As a parish, we foster a lot of connections, too. We are in partnership with four other local churches through the Community Kitchen, which provides a lovingly prepared meal every day of the week to our unhoused and hungry neighbors here in Downers Grove. We partner with the Church of the Holy Nativity in Clarendon Hills in two ways now - the Pumpkin Patch and our Youth Ministry. Our Parents' Day Out program connects us to our surrounding neighborhoods. Not to mention all the myriad ways we foster connections within our own faith community here at St. Andrew's.

God made the divine/human connection real in the person of Jesus, and that's what we celebrate at Christmas. Let's keep the energy of God's love flowing through all the ways we are connected to each other in our families and friends, our church, in our community, and in the natural world. It's how God designed it to be!

Love,
Gregg+

MOTHER TARA’S KENYA TRIP

I am excited to announce I will travel to Nairobi, Kenya, in January to take part in a clergy exchange program called Karibu Ministries (<https://www.diowis.org/news/karibu-ministries>). Karibu aims to share resources between the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) by facilitating training sessions for clergy on both continents. The learning is reciprocal: U.S. clergy travel to Kenya to teach formal seminary-type courses in leadership and management, while the Kenyan clergy give the Americans insight into the exponential growth of the church happening in East Africa. Kenyan clergy also travel to the U.S. twice each year. Church attendance declines in the U.S., but the opposite is true in Kenya. The ACK now boasts nearly 6 million members nationwide, about 10 percent of the population. They are increasing by 7% per year! I aim to crack the code of their success while I’m there and bring some strategies home to Downers Grove.



From January 13th-22nd, I will co-lead a new initiative for Youth Ministers, followed by a three-day session for parish priests. I will be in the Diocese of Nairobi and the nearby Diocese of Machakos. The trip is fully funded by Karibu Ministries, which was started a few years ago by the Rev. Canon Martin Olando Wesonga, Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Machakos, and Fr. Rob Davis of St. Boniface Episcopal Church in Mequon, Wisconsin. The two priests met on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2019 and decided they needed to build a bridge between the clergy in their two home countries. The program is growing each year, and this will be the 7th U.S. mission to Kenya, while the 4th mission from Kenya to the U.S. is happening this month in Wisconsin.


If you’d like to read more about Karibu, here is an article from *Living Church* magazine about the program:


<https://livingchurch.org/news/news-episcopal-church/wisconsin-kenya-partnership-promotes-unity-and-mutual-learning/>



Merry Christmas from the Wardens and Vestry!

Blessings to all in the New Year!



THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

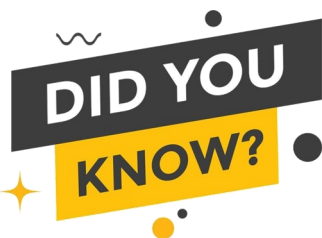
ALMIGHTY GOD, YOU HAVE GIVEN YOUR
ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON TO TAKE OUR NATURE
UPON HIM, AND TO BE BORN THIS DAY OF A
PURE VIRGIN:

**GRANT THAT WE, WHO
HAVE BEEN BORN
AGAIN AND **MADE**
YOUR CHILDREN
BY ADOPTION AND
GRACE, MAY DAILY BE
RENEWED BY YOUR
HOLY SPIRIT;**

THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, TO
WHOM WITH YOU AND THE SAME SPIRIT BE
HONOR AND GLORY, NOW AND FOR
EVER. AMEN.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD: CHRISTMAS DAY (III)

DID YOU KNOW?



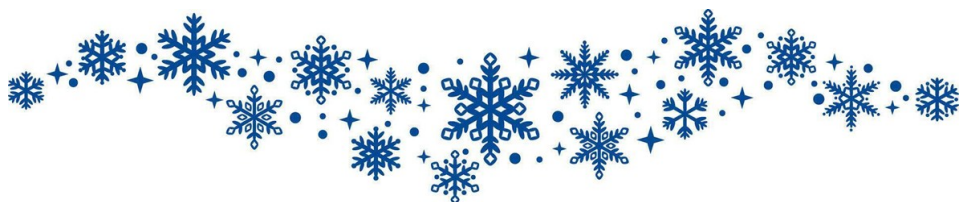
Planned Giving - St Andrew's receives quarterly dividends from 3 Endowments - the CA Young Trust, the St. Andrews Trust, and the Catherine Morse Endowment. The Catherine Morse Endowment is probably new to you, but it's the first and by far the oldest and has contributed the most to our church. In 1907, through generous Planned Giving, parishioner Catherine Morse gave the Bishop of Chicago \$2000 to establish an endowment for the long-term benefit of St. Andrews. As part of the Bishop's Trust Fund, that gift is today invested in the Diocesan Foundation's Common Fund (the same fund that manages St. Andrews' 2 other trusts) and pays quarterly dividends of \$2000 to our church; roughly the same dividend amount we receive from the other 2 investments. That's right - a \$2000 gift in 1907 can continuously generate a \$2000 quarterly dividend today that will continue to increase in the years ahead; a wonderful example of the power of Planned Giving. Later in Crosscurrents, read the fascinating, inspiring details of this wonderful parishioner whose Planned Giving has benefited St. Andrews for the last 118 years.

Smart Giving - Want to save on your income taxes while you help St. Andrews? Recent changes to the federal income tax laws encourage year end charitable giving by allowing you to claim up to a \$2000 (for joint filers) deduction or \$1000 (for a single tax payer) deduction for charitable contributions up to these amounts even if you don't itemize your deductions. This means you can help St. Andrews now with a 2025 contribution or by prepaying a portion of your 2026 pledge. It's also a great time to help St. Andrews with any remaining 2025 RMD dollars (required minimum distributions for those 73 or older) or tax smart gifts from those eligible to take advantage of QCDs (qualified charitable donations).

Power of Prayer - in the November Crosscurrents, you read about the plight of William Gonzalez - a parishioner of St. Paul and the Redeemer who was wrongfully detained by ICE in their Baldwin Michigan facility where he was visited by Bishop Clark. On Oct 30th, a federal judge ordered his release and ruled against ICE's indefinite detainment of Mr. Gonzalez. While Mr. Gonzalez's legal saga isn't over, he's no longer in custody and able to rejoin his family and church.

Celebration Sunday - many thanks to everyone who brought their favorite pie(s) to share on Celebration Sunday. We enjoyed over a dozen different types of pies - all types of fruit and nut pies and even pork pies. We had enough to share with our Community Kitchen guests on Sunday as well as on the following Friday, Nov 21.

Remembering the Homeless - at 2PM on Saturday, Dec. 20th, National Memorial Homeless Day, St. Andrew's will host a day of remembrance for our Community Kitchen guests including all the CK hosts from all the participating Downers Grove CK churches. Since Community Kitchen began almost 3 years ago, we've made many friends with guests we serve every week, but miss many former guests who no longer visit. On Dec.20, we'll remember them all.

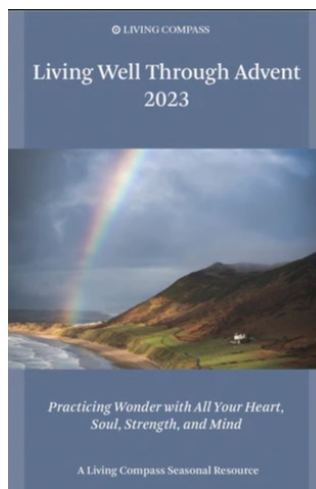


ADULT FORUM NEWS

Living Well Through Advent

No Adult Forums are scheduled for Advent this year. But I have two suggestions for your Advent discipline. First, take advantage of Fr. Gregg's Quiet Day on December 6. And, second, make use of the complimentary copies of *Living Well Through Advent 2025*:

Practicing Generosity with All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind. Copies of this Living Compass resource are available in the Gathering Space. This devotional guide provides daily readings throughout Advent, concluding with Christmas Day, all on the theme of generosity. May you have a blessed Advent and Christmas.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Hello Families and THANK YOU for joining us this year in our children's formation program.

With your children, we have experienced the Bible and learned about:

- the loving kindness of Jesus
- God's loving presence, and
- the messages of fellowship and peace through the study of our Christian faith

We have had fun together:

- playing instruments and singing
- listening to stories that help build relationship with God, and
- had many creative and constructive discussions about God's forgiveness, unwavering presence, and above all, the friendship of Jesus!!!!

We have had amazing family services, too. Many of the kids even shared and spoke to the WHOLE CHURCH of what they are called to do at St Andrews. We are incredibly thankful for you parents and helpers, too!

BE blessed and keep caring for others,
Mother Tara and Amy

CHANGE OF SCHEDULE:

There will NOT be Sunday school on Sunday, December 14 .

Please come to the service and enjoy
Lessons and Carols at the 10am Eucharist.

Youth Group gets some snuggles from therapy dogs, Beau and Lila. Parishioners Dave and Laura Howland brought their amazing therapy dogs to a youth group meeting in November to teach the kids about what therapy dogs do and share their love.

YOUTH GROUP



YOUTH MUSIC AND CHOIR AT ST. ANDREW'S

The Youth Choir did a wonderful job of singing at our November 16th Family Service. I'm so very proud of all the singers. Please feel free to tell these young singers how much you appreciate their singing and their service to our church.

December is a very busy singing month for us. We will have our regular choir rehearsals on December 7th, 14th, and 21st. The choir is preparing to sing at the 4pm Christmas Eve service.



Our Christmas Eve service is a wonderful family celebration. Youth Choir singers are to meet me in the church at 3:15pm to rehearse our song with Mr. Hoover and the piano.

After all the preparation for the Christmas Eve service, we will take a two week rehearsal break. The Youth Choir will not have rehearsal on Sunday, December 28 or on Sunday, January 4. We will resume our regular rehearsals on January 11 to prepare to sing at the Family Service on February 1, 2026.

When the choir and the children in the Christmas pageant sing the wonderful Christmas Hymns of the season it brings me such Joy. I hope everyone has a joyful Christmas and a New Year filled with good health and peace.

Kindly,

Chris Stansbury



MERRY CHRISTMAS



Take a Walk on the Cookie Walk!!

The Episcopal Church Women (ECW) Cookie Walk,

a longstanding tradition,
will take place on **Saturday, December 6,**
in the Parish Hall from **9:00AM-11:00AM.**

All Parishioners are welcome!!! Come choose from our wide selection of holiday cookies for your Christmas events and gifts.

At the 2024 Cookie Walk, **20 bakers provided 60 platters** of cookies. Total cookie sales for our Cookie Walk event were **just under \$700.** Proceeds from this event has helped fund activities, events, and causes both at St. Andrew's and in our community.

If you would like to bake for the event, please sign up in the Gathering Space. Cookie drop-off will be Friday, December 5 in the kitchen from 10AM to 3PM.



ECW (EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN) DOLLARS

Planning for the holiday season?
Searching for the right Christmas gift for family and friends? Need Jewel gift cards for your Revive Christmas basket?? How about a gift for school teachers and the postman? Or cards for your weekly grocery shopping? **Gifts cards are always a good choice!!!**



The ECW Gift Card program allows you to choose from over 500 vendors that provide gift cards in various denominations. You select gift cards for purchase and ECW gets a certain percentage back from Raise Right (the company who offers this fundraising program). Some of the favorite vendors include grocery stores, restaurants, gas stations, retail, travel companies, etc. Here are some examples:

Visa (no activation fee) American Express (no activation fee)

AMC theaters	Amazon	Target
Mariano's	Bass Pro Shops	Walmart
Fresh Thyme	Bath and Body	TJ Maxx/Home
McDonalds	Crate and Barrel	Goods
Starbucks	IKEA	Lowe's
Kohl's	Jewel	CVS Pharmacy

Stop by the ECW table to pick up an order form and **COMPLETE** list of vendors or to buy "cash and carry" cards. **Please pay by cash or check at the time of the order.**

FINAL ORDER DATE: December 7

**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE ORDERED THIS YEAR.
PROCEEDS FROM THE ECW GIFT CARD PROGRAM HELP
PURCHASE ITEMS FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR DONATIONS TO
LOCAL CHARITIES.**



**EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN(ECW)
ORNAMENT EXCHANGE**

All Women are Welcome!!!!

The **ECW ORNAMENT EXCHANGE** will be held on **December 9** from **7:00PM-9:30PM** at Kathy Johnston's home. This is a wonderful event and an excellent way to begin the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Each attendee brings a **wrapped Christmas ornament** for a fun and friendly exchange (there is some swapping involved). So, mark this on your calendar. Sign up in the Parish Hall to bring an appetizer or dessert.

**Kathy's address: 527 Wilson Street
Downers Grove, IL**



St. Andrew's

2025 MEN'S ANNUAL

Christmas Luncheon

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12

Be sure to mark the date

St. Andrew's Church PARISH HALL— 11:30-2:00

Featuring great catered food from Lombard's

GREEK ISLANDS RESTAURANT

Saganaki - Salad - Gyros - Chicken - Lamb -

Vegetables - Dessert - Coffee - Tea - Soda -

Greek Wine & Beer included

Please email or text to let me know you are attending

a **signup sheet** is also in the Gathering Space

kurtswiesner1040@aol.com 630-667-6221

\$30 total price per person includes Food, Beverages, & Tax

Same price as last year





A SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS With Eucharist

**December 14,
at the 10:00 AM Holy Eucharist**

Please join us for this special, moving service made up of seven readings followed by beautiful hymns and carols. They will take us on a journey immersing us in hope and anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ. The Holy Eucharist will be celebrated as a part of the service. What a wonderful way to reflect on the hope and light of the season!

ST. ANDREW'S NEW 2026 **CHURCH PHOTO DIRECTORY**

We will be taking individual and family portraits during December for our new color Church Photo Directory, published every two years. The directory will be printed and distributed in early 2026.

Photo dates for the directory are:

Sunday, **December 7**

Sunday, **December 14**

Sunday, **December 21**

2026 St. Andrew's Photo Directory



Photos will be taken in the Phil Room, (Room #5) 2nd floor opposite the Nursery, between services (9:00-9:45AM) and following the second service (11:00AM-12:00PM).

Miles Boone, parishioner and professional photographer, will once again be taking the pictures, for which there is no charge nor sale of photos.

Signup sheets for the three Sundays will be in the Gathering space in mid-November. Simply tell us the day and time period you plan to have your photo taken.

You will be asked to verify phone and address information for the Directory before having your picture taken, which is about five minutes per family/person.

Seating will be available outside the photo room and “shoots” will be taken in order of your arrival rather than by specific time.

Please don't miss this opportunity to have an updated photo in our Directory, which benefits clergy and all of us in placing names with faces.

Please contact Kurt Wiesner if you have any questions or special needs.

ST. LUCIA GUILD

St. Lucia Guild will have their annual Christmas meeting on Wednesday, December 17 at St. Andrew's in the Parish Hall. The meeting will begin at 10:00AM followed by the optional Christmas Gift Exchange and potluck lunch. We will also be collecting for the Fish food Pantry. This is an optional donation.



St. Lucia will not meet in January but look for information to come about the February 25 meeting, on February

St. Lucia welcomes all new members. If anyone has questions about the Guild and its activities, please call Nancy Stapleton, 630-964-4494.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

Christmas is a special time to remember those we love and to give thanks for God's blessings. Your contribution in the form of a memorial or a thankoffering to the Altar Guild will help purchase the Christmas Flowers. Please use the Christmas Flower Offering **Pew Envelope** and clearly indicate your intention on the envelope. Checks payable to St. Andrew's Church. *Deadline for the printed list is Sunday, December 21.*



SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, January 7, 2026, 5:30 PM for a Chilean meal in the Parish Hall with The Rev. Russ and Heidi Smith, US missionaries to Chile for 40 years. There is no charge for dinner, and all (including babies and small children) are welcome. Sign up and details to follow. For questions, contact Connie Butler.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

December 1

Miles Boone
Joe Parker

December 2

Patrick Anderson
Noreen Lopez
Anna Pope

December 3

Bill Hedrick
Bill Johnston

December 4

Rolle Burgeson
Laurie Mack

December 6

Jeff Burgeson

December 9

Mackenzie Pecoraro

December 10

Jonathan Platt
Diana Rhoads
Bob Von Dreele

December 11

Bobbie Sieja

December 12

Kathy Seidler

December 16

Jillian Morris
Al Woitovich

December 18

Alissa Kartsounes

December 19

Tim Hickey

December 20

Holly Olmsted-Hickey

December 23

Ron Williams

December 24

John Hanson
David Morgan
Jake Morgan

December 27

Bob-Simeon Coritana

December 29

Kristi Maher

December 31

Paul Swanson

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

December 26

Gracia & Jim Morton
Anne & Christopher Nelsen

December 29

Amanda & Brett Slezak

December 30

Gregg & Laura Morris

December 31

Ryan & Kimberly Henricks

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

January 2

Brian Budzynski
David Weaver

January 3

Nancy Stapleton

January 5

Lauren Hopkins

January 7

Quentin Lee

January 8

Mary Anne Boo

January 9

Elaine Cheng

January 10

Iris Lerette
Louise Trucano

January 11

Orin Albrecht
Gwen Leyffer

January 12

Breanne Courtney
Mia Hess
Ellie Maher

January 13

Karin Anderson

January 14

Bill Hurst
Gregg Morris

January 15

Dan Hopkins

January 16

Jim Haley

January 17

Betsy Wilson

January 18

Reed Pence

January 20

Jack Minster

January 21

Ella Hardman
Mike Murphy
Brian O'Leary

January 22

Pattie Woitovich

January 23

Marge Davis

January 24

Claire Svehla

January 25

Michael Kawesa
Ava Slezak

January 27

Ginger Cantu
Jack Courtney

January 28

Peggy Sheehan

January 29

Michael Conderman
Eric Hardman
David Lerette
Jennifer Matiuk
Briony Nelsen
Ruth Winningham

January 31

Earle Greene

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

January 3

JT & Melanie Waszkowski

January 12

Dave & Debbie Wilderman

January 16

Anna & Chris Chika

January 22

Amy & Lucas Smith

January 23

John Pieranunzi & Lisa Pocius

January 24

Bill & Kathy Johnston

FEBRUARY CROSSCURRENTS ARTICLES

ARE DUE JANUARY 19, 2026.





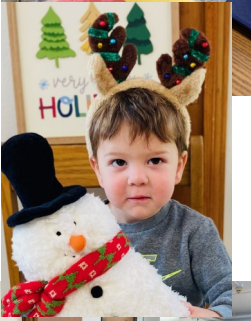
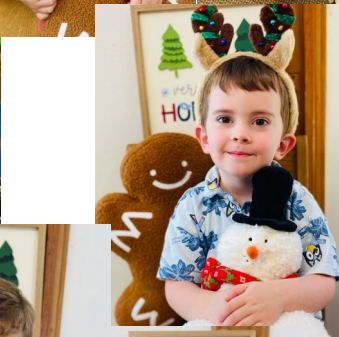
Christmas greetings from PDO children and staff

The holiday season is underway and the Parents' Day Out (PDO) children are filled with holiday cheer. To experience the magic of Christmas, simply observe the faces of little ones while you read them a Christmas story, teach them a song or help them make a Christmas craft.

PDO celebrates the season with festive decorations, Christmas stories and songs, and creative holiday crafts. Be sure to look for the children's handmade Christmas light ornaments on the Downers Grove Christmas tree.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!





I Am There

PASTORAL CARE CORNER

Now God says to us what He has already said to the earth as a whole
Through His grace-filled birth:

I am there. I am with you.

I am your life. I am your time.

I am the gloom of your daily routine.

Why will you not hear it?

I weep your tears - pour yours out to me.

I am your joy. Do not be afraid to be happy;

ever since I wept, joy is the standard of living

That is really more suitable than the anxiety and grief
of those who have no hope.

I am the blind alley of all your paths,

for when you no longer know how to go any farther,

Then you have reached me, though you are not aware of it.

I am in your anxiety, for I have shared it.

I am in the prison of your finiteness, f

or my love has made me your prisoner.

I am in your death, for today I began to die with you,

because I was born,

And I have not let myself be spared

any real part of this experience.

I am present in your needs;

I have suffered them and they are now transformed.

I am there. I no longer go away from this world.

Even if you do not see me now, I am there.

My love is unconquerable.

I am there.

It is Christmas.

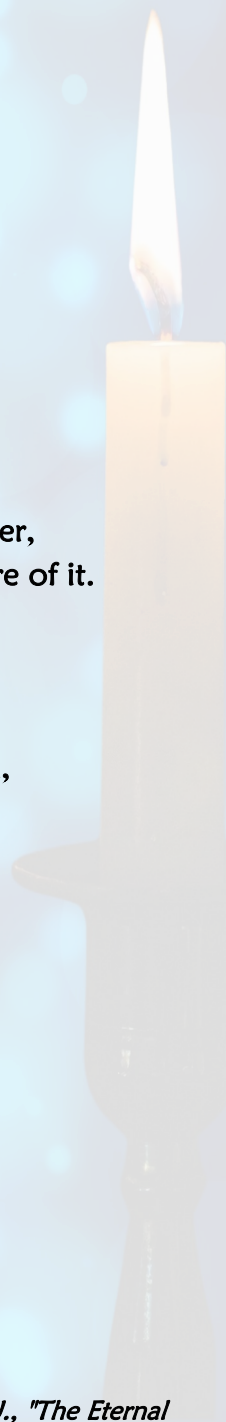
Light the Candles!

They have more right to exist than all the darkness.

It is Christmas.

Christmas that lasts forever.

- Karl Rahner, S.J., *"The Eternal*



St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
1125 Franklin Street, Downers Grove, IL 60515-3551

Phone: 630-968-9188 E-Mail: info@saintandrewschurch.net

Parish Website: www.saintandrewschurch.net

Instagram: [@st.andrewsepiscopal](https://www.instagram.com/st.andrewsepiscopal)

Facebook: Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church of Downers Grove

THE STAFF

The Rev. Gregg A. Morris	Rector
The Rev. Tara Osborne	Associate Rector
The Rev. Dr. Jo Ann Lagman	Assisting Priest
The Rev. Rose Cicero	Deacon
Sally Hedrick	Chaplain
Joanne Schupbach	Chaplain
Diane Sellinger	Chaplain
Diana Bolz Rhoads	Chaplain
Kathryn R. Nazzarini	Parish Music Director
James Hoover	Organist
Dellana Mote	Parish Administrator
Chris Stansbury	Youth Music Director
Amy Smith	Children's Ministry Assistant
Chris Ponstein	Bookkeeper
Liz Foreman	Parents Day Out Director

THE PARISH VESTRY

Gracia Morton, Sr. Warden
Bob Sellinger, Jr. Warden

Diane Sellinger, Clerk of the Vestry
Mike Dunn, Parish Treasurer

2023

Matt Andrews
Neil Cleary
Malinda Hamann
Gary Robbins

2024

Chloe Banda
Barbara O'Dell
Jacob Osojnak
John Toussiant

2025

Jack Courtney
Laura Holm
Janine Pickett
Tim Seidler

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday	8:00AM	Holy Eucharist <i>In-person Only</i>
	10:00AM	Holy Eucharist <i>In-person and on Facebook Live</i>

CROSSCURRENTS

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
1125 Franklin Street
Downers Grove, IL 60515-3551

Address Service Requested

